



ARKLE Veterinary Care, LLC
1020 Concord Rd, Smyrna, GA, 30080
Phone: 770-435-6700
Fax: 770-434-4863
Email: arklevetcare@bellsouth.net
Website: www.ArkleVetCare.com

Elizabethan Collars in Dogs



When my dog was discharged from the hospital she was wearing a large plastic collar. Is this really necessary?

Elizabethan collars or *E-collars* are plastic "hoods" or cones placed around the head to prevent an animal from licking at a surgery site, wound or dressing. It is natural for dogs to lick their wounds but this can seriously delay healing and result in infection or injury. It is important that a protective collar is used, especially when the dog is unattended and could inadvertently injure itself.

My dog appears very upset when she is wearing the collar and bangs into objects. This frightens her. Can I do anything?

Most dogs will get used to the collar after a few hours. You can ease the transition by keeping your pet in a confined space where there are no small moveable objects such as stools, chairs and tables which would move if knocked.

"Ensure that any valuable objects are placed in a safe place to prevent accidental damage."

The collar restricts vision from the sides and behind and initially causes difficulty for many pets when they must walk in tight or narrow spaces. It is important to assist them as much as possible. Ensure that any valuable objects are placed in a safe place to prevent accidental damage.

Can I allow my dog outside by itself with the E-collar on?

This is not recommended due to the increased risk of injury to your pet. Your dog is at greater risk of becoming entangled in plants or bushes that could result in injury and distress. Most dogs will tolerate a collar quite well if given controlled exercise on a lead.

Will eating and drinking be a problem for my dog?

A correctly sized and adjusted collar should allow for normal feeding and drinking. If your dog normally eats or drinks from a deep bowl but refuses to eat with the collar on, try offering food in a shallow dish or plate. If you feel you must remove the protective collar, make sure your pet is supervised while eating, and replace it as soon as the meal is finished. Some dogs will benefit from elevating the food or water while wearing the protective collar.

Is there any special care that the collar requires?

It is important that both sides of the collar are kept clean. If it is difficult to do this while your pet is wearing the collar, you may remove and clean the collar, but make sure your pet is fully supervised so that it does not injure itself.

A small minority of dogs will not tolerate these collars. If you have problems, please do not hesitate to contact us.

*This client information sheet is based on material written by: Ernest Ward, DVM
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